

Treasures, tales in a gem of a new book

By Roger Boye

WHEN A CERTAIN Mississippi plantation owner joined the Confederate Army in 1863, he knew he couldn't trust Southern banks to protect his small hoard of United States gold coins.

Therefore, he secretly buried his money next to his home near Vicksburg, planning to reclaim it when the Civil War was over. But the man soon was killed in battle, and Union forces burned his plantation.

For more than 100 years, those valuable gold coins from the 1840s and 1850s remained in the ground, seemingly lost forever. But in the early 1970s, "treasure hunters," using electronic metal detectors, uncovered the cache, which by then was worth a small fortune.

That tale of hidden gold is just one of many fascinating vignettes in "Adventures With Rare Coins," by Q. David Bowers, a prominent California coin dealer. Using a first-person narrative, Bowers has put together what might be the finest new coin book of

the year, a 305-page work that includes dozens of beautiful illustrations.

Few numismatists are as qualified to write about the romance of collecting as is Bowers. He's one of the country's most respected coin dealers and is the author of more than a dozen books. Like some of his other works, "Adventures With Rare Coins" includes an index that is especially helpful for finding information in a book filled with so many tantalizing yarns.

Unfortunately, the narrative suffers in a few spots from superfluous detail, especially in the chapter on how Bowers and his longtime business partner got started in the coin business. The author could have used a good copy editor.

But the criticisms are minor because the book is a fast, intriguing read. If it doesn't make you a lifelong coin-collecting enthusiast, nothing will.

To order a copy, send \$14.95 to Bowers & Ruddy Galleries, Suite 600-NR, 6922 Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles, Cal. 90028.